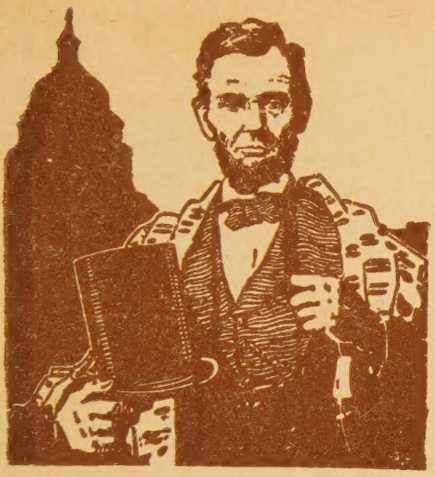

LINCOLN

The World Emancipator

By John Drinkwater

Ralph - From Helen -

Feb - 14, 19

Lincoln
The World Emancipator

LINCOLN

THE WORLD EMANCIPATOR

BY

JOHN DRINKWATER

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I

'Liberty'

LINCOLN

THE WORLD EMANCIPATOR

I

'LIBERTY'

LINCOLN, the world emancipator. It is a significant phrase, having surely an air of reality for those who know the story of the man. Among all men in the modern history of the world there is none who has so persuasively that magnetic union of mastery and sympathy that fills our minds when we think of the spiritual liberator.

Intimately of the world, yet unsoiled by it; vividly in contact with every emotion of his fellows and aware always of the practical design of their lives; always lonely, brooding apart from all, yet alienated from none — Abraham Lincoln, pioneer, citizen, country lawyer, astute poli-

tician, and incorruptible statesman, stands readily enough in the alert imagination as a new symbol of regenerative power. Already, half a century after his death, the mind of man perceives in this single-hearted champion of a moral idea a figure to whom all sorrows and ambitions may be brought, a touchstone by which every ideal of conduct may be tried, a witness for the encouragement of the forlornest hope.

'Character is fate,' said the Greek, and character remains for us the only true inspiration. He who most completely realizes himself is he who most fitly assumes leadership of men, not only in the days of his life on earth, but in the story that he becomes thereafter. And for nearly two thousand years there has been no man of whom we have record who has so supremely realized himself to the very recesses of his being as this American, Lincoln. Rightly envisaged in the

universal imagination, he might well become the world's emancipator. But, before we consider further his aptness to this end, let us ask ourselves what emancipation means, and from what power it is that we need emancipation.

I am speaking now as an Englishman among Americans. The thousand details of domestic policy that beset this country, as every other, are not my concern. I can form fleeting and casual impressions of their nature, but I am not so simple as to be guilty of the impertinence of passing judgment upon them. The internal machinery of a nation's affairs is that nation's own business, and we in England have learned enough by the example of certain busy visitors presuming to teach us the way to carry our own coats to avoid a like rashness and abuse of hospitality. So that of the local differences between us I have here nothing to say.

These are the things that do much to make up the charm of a holiday journey, to be observed with good humour and respect. But moving among American people I am daily more and more aware that underneath all external differences there is a profound unity of being in our two races, that the problems confronting us are largely the same, and that any supreme figure that can be found to stand for an inspiration to either of us may very rightly so stand to both. And if Lincoln should prove to be such a figure, then we in England should be proud and happy if we could do something towards the discovery, rejoicing without any envy that he rose in Illinois and not from one of the counties of the Thames or the Tweed.

I look at a handful of American coins. On all alike I find one of two legends—'Liberty' and 'E Pluribus Unum.' The pressure of life may sometimes a little take the edge off your realization of the

fact that your emblem is Liberty and of the true meaning of your 'E Pluribus Unum,' just as we in England too often forget what we mean when we say that 'Britons never shall be slaves.' But, however dulled our recollection may become, the fact remains, and it is a fact of strange beauty: the American and British nations alike have at the very roots of their structure the profoundly mystical idea of the coexistence of individual liberty and national unity, an idea exquisitely expressed in those two inscriptions on your five-cent piece. In defence of that mystery, and for no other possible righteous cause, the two countries have but yesterday borne arms together. And in the play that I wrote, the mission that, in introducing my theme, I outlined as being Lincoln's, was to

> Make as one the names again
> Of Liberty and Law.

It is significant that I wrote those words long before I realized how exactly

is the spirit of them in the inscriptions on the currency that passes among you every moment; wrote them merely out of my perception of the idea that Lincoln and the fine flower of American democracy stand for.

Individual liberty and national unity. What is individual liberty, as conceived in the best democratic thought, the best thought, that is, in America and England to-day? Let us look at the facts honestly, and go back if needs be to simple beginnings.

And first let us get away from the notion that the real democratic idea is that one man is as good as another. If the word 'good' has any plain meaning at all, it is manifestly absurd to say that Bill Sykes was as good a man as George Washington, or that George the Third was as good a man as William Shakespeare. The true democratic idea is not that one man is as *good* as another, but

that in natural privileges and opportunity one man shall have as *good a chance* as another, so that Bill Sykes, if at the end he has still been unable to make a decent job of his life, shall not be able to tell society that he failed because he was deprived of his natural rights as an individual. It is by the way to say that given his natural rights Bill Sykes is pretty sure to make a far better job of his life than he ever does without them. And the sanctity of natural rights is not finally satisfied by universal education and universal franchise.

These things properly understood and exercised are well enough, but both these and other presumably liberal institutions may sometimes have the effect of betraying that very freedom of the individual that it is their right function to foster. When an educational system engages itself, as it too often does, in training a child to a preconceived end instead of

fitting him to frame a purpose of his own, or when a universal and equal franchise is used by a majority to deprive a minority of self-determination in some purely personal affair, you have the seeds of tyranny bearing their rank fruit in systems established in the name of liberty. The only natural right of the individual worth bothering about is his right freely and completely to realize himself. The only real progress in the world comes when a man, for good or ill, is allowed wholly to be himself. You cannot make him really better than he is by legislation; all you can do by legislation is, when he has been stunted in his growth and not allowed to become himself fully, to prevent the truncated version of himself from being a nuisance to his fellows.

This doctrine does not imply a license for every man to run amuck and intimidate society. For the splendid and eternally hopeful thing about human nature

is that whenever it is allowed full rational development it hardly ever wants to run amuck or to intimidate any one. In so far as it does want to do this, it has to be restrained, by force if necessary, but it is the worst casuistry of interested authority that pretends that most men are by instinct blackguards, and that only by dragooning can their blackguardism be kept under control. When a man behaves like a blackguard, it is in nearly every case because, through some incomplete opportunity of self-realization, he is not behaving like himself.

That, then, is what individual freedom means to the honest democrat. (I use the word 'democrat' always in its general sense, not in its particular American party-political sense.) And in claiming for every man the right to perfect his own nature, whatever the quality of that nature may be, we may reassure ourselves that with that perfection almost invariably goes

a responsible sense of decent behaviour in every man towards his fellows. When a man is frightened, when his being is repressed and his will twisted by the caprice of the will of others, he becomes a menace to society as surely as a sick body is a menace to society. But a free man is a menace to nobody; for in his heart is the wisdom that knows that no man is free who does not recognize the freedom of every other man on earth.

This was the first article of Lincoln's creed. It was the faith, held with passionate conviction, that bade the new American Republic take 'Liberty' for one panel of its watchword. It is the idea that has persisted through nearly five centuries of our English life, making our national unity still a thing for which more than a million men gave their lives. What that national unity means, what is the true significance of 'E Pluribus Unum,' shall be our next consideration.

II

'E Pluribus Unum'

II

'E PLURIBUS UNUM'

BEHIND all truly great and profound workings of the human spirit is a mystical element. Just as growth in nature is surrounded by the mystical processes of fertilization and birth, of unions of two forces to produce a third, of such strange ordinations as the rigours of winter preparing the harvests of the fall, so in the corporate energies of mankind building up communities and nations we are aware of primal impulses that are at a glance irreconcilable, and yet on reflection are seen to be complementary to each other. No more striking instance of this is to be found in history than in the problem that faced Lincoln when he became President of the United States.

Setting aside for the moment his constitutional responsibilities, which made

him recognize the practice of slavery under certain conditions, here was a man whose every instinct was for freeing a subject race in the name of that individual liberty of which we have spoken. In clear enough terms he proclaimed that it was no question as to the relative superiority of one race or another, or, in words that I have already used, as to whether one man was as good as another. It was merely a question, he insisted, of every man, irrespective of race or natural endowment, fulfilling himself unbeset by the tyranny of others, even though that tyranny should sometimes be beneficent in intention. And at the very moment when he had this question to settle, he was called upon to answer the claim of a vast number of people, speaking with impressive unanimity, to self-government and the right to repudiate national unity. In the same breath that he announced the freedom of the individual to be a

sacred cause in which no sacrifice could be too great, he declared resistance against this other claim to be a cause equally sacred, one for which he would and did commit his country to furious agony.

There lies the argument of as profoundly moving a drama as has ever beaten through the heart of a man and a nation. At first it would seem that in its two decisions Lincoln's mind was contradicting itself, that his refusal to the South was a negation of his stand for the negroes. Here, it might be said by sincere but superficial thought, was a plea at once for personal independence and public subjection. But this was not the truth of Lincoln's position. Had there been no slave issue, the South would have made no claim to the right of secession, and while it is important to remember that it was against this claim that Lincoln fought and not against the slave foundation so long as it was confined within

existing limitations, it is equally important to remember that at bottom what led the South to revolt was not some ideal wish for a separate national being, but the ambition to extend slave-rights which as they then stood were not in immediate dispute. While this reflection throws a very significant sidelight upon the particular case in dispute and Lincoln's attitude towards it, the fact remains that it was definitely the claim to right of secession that Lincoln resisted by force, irrespective altogether of the purpose behind the claim. What, then, is this principle of national unity that he, with all his passion for liberty, thought it right to preserve at so heavy a cost?

In the first place let us dismiss the idea that national unity is desirable merely because of numerical force, as though the people who could put the largest army into the fields of war or commerce were necessarily the people to whom national

unity meant most. This is the view of the stupidest kind of materialism, and should concern us as little as it did Lincoln. National unity is as important a thing to a Dane as it is to a Chinaman. The concerted voice of a nation of four hundred million people is not more impressive than that of one of five million, otherwise Belgium must docilely have done as Germany bade her in 1914.

It was not on such considerations as these that Lincoln opposed the division of the United States into two nations of North and South. He opposed it because he perceived that if once an internal disintegration of that kind were allowed to begin, the abstract principle of nationality would be threatened in his country, and quite possibly destroyed, and it was this abstract principle that he was defending because he was inflexibly convinced of its mystical purport in the lives of men and of the direct value it bore to individual

liberty. What the precise mystical meaning of this sense of nationality is was never more apparent than it is in the life of the world to-day. It was not the least of Lincoln's triumphs that he perceived this significance in the abstract at a time when its operation in daily affairs was far from being as obvious as it was to become a couple of generations thence.

In this matter he was largely the practical statesman working to a prophetic end, guided by spiritual instinct rather than by immediate necessities. The fact that needed the vision of the seer for Lincoln to apprehend is plain for all of us but the wantonly blind or imbecile to-day. The problem that is distracting every country alike in our western civilization to-day is the conflict between capital and labour. It is a conflict that has been brewing through thirty years of industrial development and one that was bound sooner or later to come to a crisis in the

open. But in every country, in so far as it is purely a conflict between two forces in society that have forgotten in a wild competitive turmoil that their interests are indisputably the same, the collision is not a very alarming one, nor is it by any means beyond hope of rational and permanent settlement. In England, for example, the working-man has for a generation been underpaid and overworked. This has been less due to the deliberate villainy of employers than might often be supposed from the denunciations of public agitators. The evil condition has been of slowly insidious and almost unseen growth, and capital often enough has been unconscious of its injustices. But while we may decline to indulge too freely in imprecations, the injustice has been there, and cruel in its working. Labour has very rightly revolted against it, and with the revolt has come, as may be seen by unmistakable evidence on every

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hand, a quickening on the part of capital to its responsibilities and a real desire in employers, especially the younger ones, to meet every rational demand of labour, and a new understanding of common interests. On this aspect of the question I can imagine no clearer or more convincing statement than is to be found in certain chapters of Mr. Frank Vanderlip's remarkable book, 'What Happened to Europe.' And in so far as this problem with us is a case of one body of Englishmen disputing as to certain personal rights with another body of Englishmen, there is no great difficulty in the way of settlement, nor have I any fear that such settlement will now be long delayed. The admirable temper with which our railway strike of 1919 was conducted is of the best omen, and I know from personal contact the extreme anxiety of the best of our labour leaders to reach a durable understanding without bitterness; and the ex-

perience of every country must, I am sure, be the same as ours. In so far as the labour problem in America consists of a readjustment of privileges between two bodies of Americans, it should be certain of quick and complete solution.

There is, however, another aspect of the labour question, which very materially bears upon the value of national unity of which we are speaking. By the accidents of migration it affects some countries more closely than others, but it is more or less present throughout the western world. There are floating about the earth a vast number of isolated human beings who have, in any strict sense, no nationality at all. It is perhaps when you leave your own country for a time that you most become aware of what nationality means to you; but, however that may be, in the normal course of his life a man is no more conscious on the surface of having a nationality than he

is of having a pair of boots when he goes out in the wet. If he suddenly found himself in the wet without boots he would be very acutely conscious that boots meant something. It is not a case of one nationality being better than another, just as we saw that it was not a case of one man being better than another in the matter of individual liberty. None but a tomfool Englishman thinks that the English are better than Americans, and none but a tomfool American thinks that Americans are better than the English. Each of them, when he really gets his mind down to it, knows, however critical he may be of his government and fellow-countrymen, that the very possession of an explicit nationality gives spiritual moorings and an established background to his whole life. Without this he remains always, and necessarily so, preoccupied with his personal interest, and becomes a disturbing influence wherever he may move.

Again, it is futile to blame him, but it is futile, too, to ignore the fact. He has nothing of the mystical sense of belonging to a whole that is greater than himself—that is, indeed, the greatest expression of himself; he has no symbol to speak to him of the security and splendour of a commonweal. We who have this often enough disregard it, but without it we should forlornly realize what it is to be outcast, and it is a realization that sears the spirit of man and makes him an unhappy irritant in the world. It adds to our power of individual liberty, it does not take away from it. With majestic vision Lincoln knew this, and it was the same deep understanding that led America to add to the inscription 'Liberty' that other one, 'E Pluribus Unum.' We may now see how America and England stand together in the world for this mystic union of the two things.

III

Anglo-American Union

III

ANGLO-AMERICAN UNION

WHATEVER abuse honest dealing may seem to come to in the daily pressure of life, the history of social evolution teaches us that in the long run the moral idea always triumphs over a false immediate expediency. Such expediency to-day is crying shrilly throughout the world, as though the bitterness of the past five years had gone for nothing. We must face clearly a very simple but pregnant fact: either the Great War was fought for freedom, or it was a base war.

In every country there are many people who advocate a disgusting scramble for some kind of spoils or another, people often with great influence and powerful interests, and unless this insensate gospel is steadily opposed by the rest of us with a clear moral idea, the faith in

which our friends — millions of them — died will be shamefully betrayed, and the blame will be as heavily upon us as upon the reactionaries whose little vision we failed to enlarge. But the great idea will surely assert itself, and doing so its domination is certain.

If there is one force above all others that can foster the future political and social well-being of the world, I have no hesitation in saying that it is a right understanding and coöperation between the American and English peoples. To consider first the actual magnitude of such a force. The two races together make up an agency that is in the forefront of the world in physical vigour, in commercial enterprise and experience, in public spirit, in artistic vitality, and in a reputation for personal integrity. There is no measuring the authority that would attach to any clearly defined ideal that might be expressed by the united voices

of the two countries; it would have a weight in the consciousness of the world that could not fail to impress itself indelibly.

The two races are peculiarly fitted for such unity of doctrine, by tradition and ancestry, by their literature, by their speech and the habit of their lives, and by their natural instincts. And if they should at this time speak together for an ideal that should hold the coming days against the forces of reaction, it is clear that their instincts would work as one in deciding what that ideal should be. We both boast of being free people, and the boast happily is not without reason. But our freedom is being severely tested, and it is for us to show that it can stand whatever strain may be imposed upon it by greedy or revengeful plutocrats and Prussianized militarists on the one hand and the mere delirium of anarchy on the other. Both countries

have the proud heritage of individual liberty, recorded for them at Washington and at Runnymede. To show ourselves worthy of the right, we will guard it against the inroads of the jack-in-office and the drill-sergeant. Both countries have the principle of national unity ingrained in their constitutional codes, and it is far too precious a thing to surrender to disaffected visionaries who have lost their hold on facts and who forget that liberty without law is as surely chaos in the spiritual world as it is in the material.

The assertion of these two ideas in perfect fusion — 'Liberty' and 'E Pluribus Unum' — is the moral purpose for which America and England may stand together to-day with overwhelming authority against every negation. And never have two races been more fit in natural equipment for alliance in so good a cause. In every considerable respect the way for

such a union of purpose is free of obstacles. But it is greatly to be desired that the people in the two countries who have anything to do with the leadership of thought should have every opportunity for personal acquaintance. It has been said that good-will between two nations depends more upon personal friendship than upon common interests. This may conceivably be a debatable proposition politically, but there is fortunately no question of choice. If we have not learned from the war that the common interest is an established fact, we have learned nothing — a common interest far profounder than a purely military one. In this matter it grows daily more certain that to any long-sighted view the interest of every people in the world is the common interest, and it is no longer doubtful that distemper in any spot of the globe reacts in every part of it as surely as it does in a man's body. But

while the common interest of the world is established as a matter of plain sense, and its binding power assured unless the world has turned bedlam — the apparent evidence of which we may fortunately mistrust — the value of personal friendship between peoples can hardly be overrated, and those of us on both sides of the Atlantic who desire the alliance of which I have been speaking see a peculiar and subtle necessity for this intimacy between Americans and the English.

If you from America or I from England make a trip to China or Lapland we go prepared for a life that in its external habit is wholly unlike our own. Language, clothes, manners, personal environment, business and domestic methods, are all so foreign to us that we accept the difference as a thing for interested observation, and because of its very strangeness we think no more about it. But when two people have in all essen-

tial respects the same speech and customs and appearance, there is always the likelihood of a superficial acquaintance or acquaintance at a distance emphasizing the slight differences. On each side, at first, there is a momentary tendency to suppose that the other man is working precisely to your own standard and not quite bringing it off ("putting it over," since I am in New York and not in London!), and we are aware of what seem to be little peculiarities in idiom and the cut of a coat and of table ceremony and the like, and then we are always a little apt thoughtlessly to laugh at the other fellow. We all know the capital that the cartoonists and witty paragraphists on either side make of this kind of thing. And while we all very much like to be laughed at when we are trying to be funny, we rightly enough don't so much like to be laughed at when we are trying to be natural, and so there comes from

an entirely trivial source a certain danger of friction of which we may be hardly conscious, but which none the less does its work. And one of the virtues of two days' personal intimacy is that these things are entirely forgotten. I need not say that I do not suggest that this is its chief virtue; it is a small one, but one of peculiar consequence.

Here, then, is epitomized a large movement of the public mind between two races such as perhaps more than any other at this stage of history might help in clearing up the woeful untidiness into which civilization has fallen. When the communal mind of a society or societies addresses itself to any great abstract idea, such as is here proposed, nothing is more helpful to the process than the discovery of some concrete symbol round which abstract aspirations can take shape. Never was this necessity more completely served than it is in our present case by the fig-

ure of Abraham Lincoln. I should like to think that the people which produced him would take this inevitable choice as the best tribute that an Englishman could pay to the character of their race, for no man is greater than the composite quality of the race from which he springs. The English feeling that this choice is the inevitable one is not so new a thing as it might seem. It is true that in the years 1860–65 there was a large body of opinion in England antagonistic, and very stupidly so, to Lincoln and his cause, and that body included a majority in governmental authority. But it is equally true that a large and very populous part of England supported the Union with heroic self-sacrifice; there are still living men who remember the almost starving crowds of cotton operatives kneeling down in the great town-square at Manchester when the first cotton bale was brought in after the war. And it was an

act, not merely of thanksgiving for returning livelihood, but of grave assurance that the right, for which they had suffered three thousand miles away, had won. No cause in those years in England that had behind it the prestige of Bright and Cobden was without a solid following of the best and most weighty thought in the country. We in England to-day who look to Lincoln as the exemplar of a crusade in which we so profoundly believe, are not without an ancestry who would bless our judgment. It is now the time to examine more closely the precise way in which Lincoln is fitted for this election.

IV

Lincoln as Symbol

IV

LINCOLN AS SYMBOL

THE life-story of Lincoln in its recorded detail is too well known to be retold, least of all by an Englishman in America. Yet there are some aspects of it that have to be considered anew for our purpose. It has been my privilege recently to spend several days in the Middle-West country, surrounded by the Lincoln tradition. There more than anywhere else, I suppose, is emphatic witness of what Lincoln is in the American mind to-day. Often you will meet men who remember him in his lawyer days, and almost everybody has at one generation's remove personal recollections of his daily life and a store of characteristic stories to tell about him. The figure of 'Old Abe' looms largely, and quite naturally, in the mind of a generation that

has hardly forgotten him as a neighbour, and perhaps a little to the exclusion of that other figure that is not of local, or even national, but universal significance. It would be odd, indeed, if the man, whose homely habit and racy humour typify so exactly those strains in American character, were not especially dear in the hearts of his countrymen for that side of his personality. But while a stranger listens enchanted and with entire sympathy to these illuminations, be they gospel or apochryphal, he knows that in a hundred pilgrimages on earth he may be delighted by such sagas in little of the presiding genius. And should you or I ever become figures of even national importance, qualities would be discovered in us to lend colour to the same charming kind of celebration.

But when the evening closes and the pleasant gossip is over, the stranger goes up alone and remains with another Lin-

coln, of whom these good yarns were but the trappings and the suits. He remembers the long determination of days in the wild places of Kentucky and Indiana, the slow preparation of a great executive genius on the slow and rambling Illinois circuit, the humble tenderness among his fellows of a man whose vision lay far beyond theirs, the awakening consciousness of a destiny to leadership, and the simple assumption of authority at a moment when the difficulties of authority were without parallel in the nation's history, when divine fitness alone could have called this man from relative obscurity above the claims of a dozen others famous in the public mind. And, remembering these things, the stranger, if he be an Englishman, proudly remembers, too, that the founders of a race great enough to produce this man, in whom practical ability and spiritual majesty were so strangely blended, were a little group of

voyagers from his own country, setting out to build a new world after their own gallant hearts. He responds, as likely enough he has never done before, to the commonplace phrase, 'our American cousins.' He tells himself that he has blood in his veins drawn not very far back in history from the stock that bore this hero of life, and he feels splendidly the kinship moving down from the Ironsides of England to Abraham Lincoln of America, and back again, as it were, to the fearless yeoman-merchant stock among whom he still moves in his own country and of whom he got all that he most cares to think of in his own character. And the stranger goes the more gladly among his American friends for his thought. He knows that in this man, the fine flower of the native chivalry of their race, there is one in whom all his own best aspirations are consummated and given human form. He feels through

this manifestation that the deepest desires of his own people and theirs are the same in the texture of their being.

If we set aside for the moment what we call the local idiom of character, there is but one country in the world outside America that could by any chance have produced a man of the exact intellectual cast and moral significance of Lincoln, and it is England. Nor would an Englishman wish to think that in any other race than the American could be produced a man corresponding to an ideal of his own. This is not said in any narrowly parochial sense, as implying that the apotheosis of the American or the English race is a finer thing than that of others. No intelligent American or Englishman would speak without understanding reverence of Cavour and Garibaldi, of William the Silent, of Joan of Arc, or of the Athenian princes. But these are the achievement of a genius in every case other

than our own, and, save in an entirely general way, we admire in no spirit of emulation. The virtues that were so admirable there may, it is true, be ours too, but we recognize no constitutional affinity. The human spirit there expressed itself to the same noble ends toward which we may reach, but their manner was not our manner, and they remain an inspiration without informing us in the realization of ourselves through the processes of our racial characteristics. It is the men who come to these same great issues and at the same time are of our own blood who must necessarily remain our best instructors. And in salient qualities an Englishman finds his own best potentiality expressed as surely and fully in Lincoln as though this man had spent his life in an English environment. So that if an Anglo-American alliance of the kind we discussed can be achieved for the good of the world, there even is no figure so well fitted as he

around whom may crystallize the governing idea of such a union. Through a common homage we shall point our imaginations to a common aim, and we in England may well look to America with gratitude for a light so clear, and with our gratitude will be mingled the pride of kinship.

There is no contradiction in saying that Lincoln is becoming a universal figure and at the same time that he stands in sharp definition as a distinctive ideal of the English-speaking race. It is very much like the question of language itself. The English of Shakespeare and Milton and Emerson is far from being without its meaning for a Russian or a Dane, nor are we insensible to the Spanish of Cervantes or the German of Goethe. But to the average perceptive mind among us 'Macbeth' and 'Samson Agonistes' and the 'Over-Soul' must remain more significant utterances than 'Don Quixote'

or 'Faust.' Or, again, a man may travel the world with eyes eager for the beauty of every landscape and go back to his home with a durable treasure of recollection; but his own familiar countryside will to the end have a meaning for him that none other can displace or equal. The best thought in every land is becoming more and more aware of Lincoln's greatness, but it is with no jealous sense of proprietorship that we know that the last essence of that greatness must remain always in clearer revelation to us — I embody my hopes by speaking already of America and England as us — than to the rest of the world.

In emphasizing the common characteristics of our two races, characteristics that may work so powerfully for good, I am by no means unaware of our differences. They are many and far from negligible. It is a notable thing that in this matter, too, Lincoln is very directly

to our purpose, and it will be worth while to enquire in what they consist and in what way they seem to be reconciled in Lincoln's personality. In doing this I know I shall not be accused of abusing the privilege of a guest. No words of mine can express my sense of the courtesy and friendliness with which I have been met by Americans of every interest and shade of political opinion and ancestral tradition. I want to analyze our differences merely in pursuance of my general scheme. For to understand a difference is to respect it.

V

Anglo-American Differences (I)

V

ANGLO-AMERICAN DIFFERENCES (I)

It is always easier for a stranger to generalize, and to generalize shrewdly, about a country than it is for the people native to it. He is necessarily but very slightly informed, by comparison, as to the detail of organization and matters of personal taste and prejudice, but he can, nevertheless, take a general view that is often very little out of focus. The very fact of being in new surroundings inevitably sharpens his faculty of observation. And while this enables him often to see things that custom is apt to erase from any conscious recognition, it also makes him refer his own deductions back to the environment of his own country, which he thus realizes with new clarity, and he may thus sometimes be in a position to draw not uninforming contrasts.

We may begin by considering the more superficial differences between America and England, many of them, perhaps, so trivial as to be no more than insignificant accidents. The first obvious impressions of an Englishman in America are of size and noise and a certain heterogeneous quality in the character of the community. The size bewilders him a little, but it affects no more than the arrangement of the ordinary facilities of life. In England if you are to make a six hours' railway journey, it is an uncommon event that involves a day or two of preparation and you travel from end to end of the country. In America you go for a six hours' run with as little thought as you would take a car down the street, and the first time the stranger stays in a train for twenty-four hours and consults his map to find that he has apparently made but a stride from the coast, he may be forgiven a little perplexity. But here

is a difference that is plainly of no consequence, implying nothing. The same may be said of the noise. London seems to be thunder until you have been in New York. I amuse myself by trying to explain this, but without much success. Perhaps the height of the buildings has something to do with it, perhaps the greater traffic speed, perhaps an innate sense in the people that they live in a large country and must speak loudly to be heard. But whatever the cause, the fact is there. An Englishman in an assembly of Americans spends most of his time in wondering how any single voice can be distinguished among so much vigour. But, if he deals fairly with himself, he remembers too that he himself often cannot be heard at all. The rather vociferous headlines of the American press and the vast expanses of an advertisement seem to him to be symptomatic of the same necessity, whatever it may

be. But he quickly realizes from it all that there is as little sense in supposing that his American friends are unduly excited as there is in supposing that his own people are asleep. It is a difference no more important than the fact that here the traffic keeps to the right and not to the left, or that the dollar in his pocket represents more than the shilling at home in his bank account. He has to keep his wits about him, that is all.

The heterogeneous quality of which I have spoken is another matter. The visitor soon recognizes that running through the country is a strong strain of blood other than that of the first English and Dutch settlers. I do not mean the definitely alien population, or the individual strays who have lost all sense of national unity. Of these I have already spoken. But in almost every American citizen, to whom nationality is a matter of cardinal importance equal with his

sense of personal liberty, there is a suggestion of a cosmopolitan instinct that comes of a slow process of assimilation of many strains into one composite racial effect. It has been suggested sometimes to me by shrewd American friends that the great size of the country, making complete contact with the entire national life extremely difficult for the average individual, tends to make provincialism more prevalent than it is in England, where it is relatively easy to keep in touch with the general activity from John O'Groats to Land's End. But the exact opposite seems to me to be the truth. Provincialism has never in my mind implied an inferior kind of life, and in England the provinces have contributed a good deal more than their share to the country's stock of national enlightenment. But whether its prevalence be reckoned a virtue or otherwise, I am sure that there is less of it in America than

in England. And for the thing that takes its place we have no precise parallel. Provincialism implies being provincial to something, and in England the whole country is more or less explicitly provincial to London. This kind of fictitious relationship is, I think, not at all good for London, and not much good to the provinces, but it is a fact. But in America the two circumstances of which I have spoken, a cosmopolitan — or more strictly, perhaps, one should say metropolitan — instinct of the people and the great distances dividing one centre of population from another have resulted in the creation of a great many towns very notably cosmopolitan — or metropolitan — in character. And each of these has not only an independent unity, but also a remarkable degree of self-contained finality. You feel in them, far less than you do almost anywhere in England, that they are, so to speak, on the way to

somewhere or the destination from somewhere. They are merely and sufficiently themselves.

Two small but significant indications may be seen by a comparison between the hotels and roads of the two countries. In every town to-day much of its most important life must necessarily centre in its hotels. In England the hotels in all but the largest towns, and in most of them, are bad. The inference is, subtly but plainly, that you should want to stay there as short a time as you can, and with the least possible sense that it is worth while being in the town at all. The English roads, on the other hand, are admirable, as though everything should be done to make travel between place and place convenient. In America we find these things pertinently reversed. You go into a small town, such, shall we say, as Springfield, Illinois, and you find a hotel perfectly equipped, in close touch with

the civic life, taking an immense and impressive pride in itself, inviting you as it were to settle yourself down in a place that has not dreamt of any sovereignty but its own. But the roads are such as would raise a scream of protest in England, as though America had had neither time nor inclination to tidy up the highway between this town and that. There is a straight and businesslike railway track if you really must move on to another place, but the one you happen to be in ought to seem good enough anyway. Commerce implies some sort of means of transit, but not such as is to be made a luxurious symbol of the virtue of moving on.

This homely and perhaps not altogether unfanciful contrast is symptomatic, it seems to me, of a striking difference in the governing machines in the two countries. The theory of government in England, a small country with continual

action and reaction from point to point, is one of direct contact between parliament and the people, and a daily responsibility of the man in office to the electorate. Although it may not always operate fully in practice, that is the theory, and a government is liable to defeat and dissolution at a moment's notice if it comes into open conflict with the will of the people. In America, on the other hand, where every State, and, one might almost say, every town within the State, is an autonomous constitution, this public idea carries through to the form of Federal Government itself, and you have there a body that is, relatively speaking, remote and isolated in its authority. Again, in practice public opinion must have an influence upon the Government greater than is apparent in the nature of the instrument, but the theory is one of less immediate responsibility to the people than is the case in England.

Both systems have their virtues and defects. In America you get in the Government an increased sense of stability, which is wholesome, and an increased sense of impunity, which is dangerous. In England you get a more or less direct power of popular veto, which is altogether bracing for the Government, but at the same time you add enormously to the evils of misguided popular clamour. There are further aspects of this distinction between the two national methods to be considered.

VI

Anglo-American Differences (II)

VI

ANGLO-AMERICAN DIFFERENCES (II)

The national quality of mind that we have been discussing, produced partly by geographical facts, but more largely by a more cosmopolitan inheritance than is the Englishman's, results in two conditions of American society, one good and one bad, much more emphatic in each direction than they are in England.

Civic pride, not through the agency of municipal authorities, but in the lives of individual citizens, is altogether more impressive and effective in America than in England. Everywhere is found a real communal activity and a high standard of public service, social, artistic, and industrial. I do not mean that these things are not to be found in England, but they exist there far less commonly. It is this, incidentally, that makes the Americans

such perfect hosts, not only in their own homes, but in a public way. On the other hand, the prevalent sense of independence of external control gives any anti-social elements that may spring up a much freer license than they have with us. Lynch-law, for example, is abhorrent to every rational American citizen, but it nevertheless has a scope that would be impossible in England.

Then, again, there is the matter of political graft, if I may be forgiven for speaking of an abuse which I hear roundly denounced by every American I meet, and which is exposed daily by the entire responsible press of the country. I think that perhaps the vast natural wealth of the land and the almost entire absence of individual poverty makes money here a rather less rigid public standard than it is with us, so that a piece of official jobbery may not have quite the same colour of delinquency in the minds of the offend-

ers. This very fact, while it gives an added virtue to the scrupulous integrity that is the standard of all but one in a thousand Americans, combines with the national tradition of independence, when this latter falls into excess in the mind of some wrongly disposed thousandth person, to give him greater latitude for his intrigues than he would enjoy with us in England. Not, again, that political corruption is unknown with us; far from it, though I believe our municipal administrations to be almost uniformly clean. I wish I could deny that they are often uncommonly stupid.

This generalized difference in the two social and political expressions is apt to result in a certain misunderstanding on both sides in the minds of the shallower thinkers. Ill-informed people in England sometimes think of American life as being far more coloured than it, in fact, is by an almost violent self-consideration — a

travesty in prospect of the civic sense of which I have spoken, and by official self-interest — a corresponding travesty of these occasional but not too rigorously controlled lapses in public standards. I will say no more of these than to observe that it is the concern of every Englishman who has had the privilege of any direct experience of American life to correct so misguided an impression wherever he finds it at home. He knows that among the great majority of American people there is an earnest desire to understand and profit by external influences, and a profound detestation of public irregularity with a determination to abolish it. On the other hand Americans are sometimes apt to think of the English as being a little indecisive in handling their affairs, without realizing to the full the sensitiveness of our political machinery to many conflicting currents of popular opinion.

The problem of Ireland is a very good

example. This is not the place to discuss the long and tragic Irish difficulty in detail. But at least I may say that on the spot it presents itself with perplexing confusion of issues altogether uncomprehended when it is considered at a distance of three or four thousand miles, and when it is not seldom presented by men whose motives are not wholly those of blameless patriotism. There is no intelligent man or woman in England who does not ardently wish to see the Irish question settled, nor one that has not the deepest sympathy with Ireland's just national aspirations. You will everywhere find perfect goodwill in the minds of English thinkers — especially of young English thinkers, and most young English people are thinking very hard — for the new generation of Irishmen that is working sincerely for the new life of Ireland, but you will naturally enough find little but impatience with the men who preach a flamboyant gospel

to the ends of the earth, inspired not at all by a filial love of Ireland, but merely by political hatred of England. We have not developed these intoxications ourselves, and we do not admire them in others, nor are they shared by the clearest minds in Irish nationalism.

I wish every American who seeks enlightenment on this subject would read 'Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Movement,' written by St. John Ervine, the author of that very moving play 'John Ferguson,' and himself one of the most brilliant products of the young Irish nationalist school. From it may be learned how obstinately Ireland's internal religious conflict has stood in the way of settlement, how shamefully that conflict has been exploited by political adventurers, and how sincere is the effort that is being made by progressive thought both in England and in Ireland to remove the whole religious question from contact

with the political issue, and how clear the way would be to a common understanding if once this were done. In the meantime, while I have often, with many thousands of my countrymen, been distressed and angered by official bungling of the Irish question, I am sure that the difficulty is by no means wholly or even chiefly due to any incurable defect in the English character. Taking failure with success, we have on the whole made a pretty good job of our dealings by the peoples with whom we have been associated in government. So that when a problem persists as Irish settlement has done, we may fairly claim that the explanation is to be sought in some internal circumstance beyond our control. You might easily travel for a week through England without finding a single person who wants to withhold home rule from Ireland, and you might as easily travel as long through Ireland without finding three consecu-

tive people in agreement as to the terms upon which they would accept it.

The truth is that nations are wise to lay little stress upon their differences of character, since these upon examination are nearly always seen to result from local conditions with which it is at once idle and impertinent to quarrel. It is, indeed, well for the stranger to try to realize what these conditions are, for by doing this he will acquire a friendly tolerance for their consequent national expressions when they differ from those to which he is used in his own country. Generous criticism is as wholesome and necessary a part of international as of family affairs, being a normal corrective in human nature no matter on what scale it may be working, but it is as true of the relations between countries as of those between individuals to say that to know all is to forgive all.

In considering thus briefly the differ-

ences between America and England, I am not, I need hardly say, unconscious of the differences within the two countries themselves. They are certainly marked enough in England, and my acquaintance with America makes it clear that they are even more so here. The Tynesider is a far cry from the Sussex shepherd, and the Manchester merchant looks to an ideal that is not very apparent to the Norfolk squire, but a body of six men whose traditions represented, say, Boston, New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco, would mark a diversity of bearing towards public and social life that would not be readily matched in England. But when all is said these domestic distinctions are in each case much more obvious to a people themselves than to the outside observer. An American Westerner and an American Easterner remain more like each other than any one else in the world,

and the average foreigner would know at once that either was an American without being able to say within a thousand miles where he hailed from, just as most people here would as readily believe that I come from Cornwall as from Cumberland, when in fact I come from neither.

The salient truth remains that between the American people as a whole and the English people as a whole there is a profound community of constitutional method and ideal, and at the same time certain general differences of national character and approach. We have seen to what splendid end that community might be exercised in the present affairs of the world, and how Lincoln stands as a fitting and sufficient symbol through which this end may define itself. We have, further, considered some of the more important of those differences, and we may now see how Lincoln may serve, too, as a sufficient symbol in the imagination of both peoples for the reconciling of these.

VII

Lincoln as Reconciler

VII

LINCOLN AS RECONCILER

I HAVE already said that the only country outside America that could conceivably have produced Abraham Lincoln in his essential character is England, and that he is, perhaps, the only figure of universal significance in history, apart from her own heroes, that England would have satisfied her own best ideals in producing. Before inquiring how those differences between the two nations that we have been discussing may be reconciled in the example of this man, it will be well to analyze a little more closely the elements of his character.

It is reasonably clear that the stock from which Lincoln came was of English descent. In any case he was intellectually and spiritually a son of the Revolution of 1776. An American of pure

national strain very aptly described this Revolution to me the other day as the refusal of a community of English gentlemen to have their liberties interfered with by a meddlesome German potentate. It is a revolution that has the whole-hearted admiration of every freedom-loving Englishman to-day, who recognizes in it a cause which is his own, one for which he would have proudly stood. Lincoln's political inheritance was of virgin American quality, but it flowed in the finest English tradition. His instinctive discovery of the great principle of individual liberty within national unity was as surely the fruit of his own spirit and his personal and national environment as, shall we say, Miss Amy Lowell's vision of flowers in a summer garden is her own direct creation. But just as the poets for five hundred years, back to and beyond Chaucer, had sung this same vision before it was newly revealed

to Miss Lowell, so the guiding principle of Lincoln's character had been permeating the life of one people more dominantly than that of any other for generations when Lincoln's nation was born, and that people was the English.

Politically, then, in the highest sense, Lincoln stood for an idea towards which our English national purpose has always been. And it is not fanciful to see in the habit of his early pioneer days much that would shape him to a further kinship. No English traveller through Middle-Western America can fail to be impressed by a curious natural affinity between this landscape and his own. There are differences and the parallel need not be too precise, but no Yorkshire dalesman or Oxfordshire yeoman would have been in any perplexity in those days had he been called upon to face the land and homestead problems of Indiana or Kentucky. They would have been natural enough

to him, and he would have turned to them as readily as his own fathers did to theirs on their fells and plains. And among these vast prairies and wooded expanses he would have worked in an environment to which he was no stranger. The human eye cannot reach beyond the horizon, and the little orbit of a man's daily labour in primitive conditions is as wide in a small island as in a mighty continent. It was a mysterious providence that led those English settlers to a country where the potent influence of the soil and nature's wearing should be so strangely like that in which their ancestry had moved. To see Lincoln moulding himself in the quiet and unsensational landscape of his homeland is to remember another figure so little like him in appearance, and the long, lonely fens among which Cromwell brooded upon his country's destiny until he too rose from middle age to the direction of a troubled people.

Then from this rough tutoring, in so close intimacy with the earth, where Nature spoke in no spectacular voice and a man's ears had to be intent to catch her secrets, Lincoln turned for his profession to the law. It was a law devised in the light of new experiences and argued often less by 'precedent than by a rough-and-ready but clear sense of justice as it appeared to men who were building a new society. But its foundation was the English legal code, and in making equity its chief aim it was following an example that, however sadly it may at times have been abused, has been the proud ideal of every English court from the beginning. 'Do always all that you can to dissuade your client from a suit,' was Lincoln's counsel in later life to a novice, and the administration of law on the Illinois circuit round which he travelled by buggy with his fellow-pleaders and the judges was honourably impatient of

nice technical quibbles. It was the common purpose as far as possible to adjust quarrels in the light of plain reason and fair dealing, and although the court-rooms were often oddly unimposing they were not stuffy with the sophistries of more august assemblies. Lincoln, and a good many of the others, wanted not merely to win a case, but to establish a just one. The evasion of truth by quickness of wit had no attraction for them, and they reckoned a man's reputation to depend more upon the honesty of his clients than upon any gift for making the great appear the lesser reason. In short, Lincoln was engaged in giving simple and practical effect to the very spirit of English law, unobscured by the pedantries of dullards or the nimble equivocations of rogues by which it is so often betrayed in practice, and with which it has become encrusted. In these courts Blackstone's Commentaries, gospel as they were,

did not absolve you from the duty of understanding men and using your experience.

Here, then, is a man peculiarly equipped by circumstance for focussing the American and the English imagination in one point. His intense communal feeling, derived both in his pride in the Revolution from which his national entity came and from his life in the closely intimate society of the pioneer States where he matured, combined with his broad legal tradition, learned at English sources, to make him always loyal at once to the best qualities that we have seen to inform the American ideal of private and public service on the one hand, and that of England on the other. If there has been a slight tendency in American life to underrate the importance of influences outside the immediate community, he would have been the first to detect the mistake, and if we in England are sometimes too easily swayed by irresponsible voices, there

is no completer example to be found for our correction than in the steadfastness of Lincoln.

But in the splendid civic pride of American citizens and our own demand that government shall always be directly and immediately sensible of sincere popular feeling, he would recognize two principles rich in possibilities of good-will and mutual enlightenment. And so he adds this further service to the two races, showing us in one character the perfect choice in the things wherein we differ, as he has shown us in that character the consummation of the idea for which we have always stood in common.

The spirit of Lincoln moves in the wisest counsels of us both to-day, and the reflection is full of hope for the future of the world. I propose now to speak briefly of the relation of history to art, and to ask how the artist can help in adding significance to the word of the historian.

VIII

History and Art

VIII

HISTORY AND ART

I WAS recently discussing art and philosophy with one of the ablest of the younger school of Glasgow philosophers. I was trying to explain creative processes from the artist's point of view, and he to give them philosophical interpretation. We were spending a day together on the Grampian Hills, and now and then our talk would turn off from the subject that mostly preoccupied us. And he told me a story, with reference to nothing in particular, but having, it seemed to me, a very direct bearing upon the whole question of the function of art. It was this:

An eminent nerve specialist was treating a young English officer for shell-shock at the end of the war. There was no apparent physical ailment, but the

patient suffered from complete loss of memory of everything in his life before the moment when he recovered consciousness in the hospital, and from deep and continuous mental depression. When other treatments had wholly failed, the doctor tried hypnosis, with this result. In the hypnotic state the patient reconstructed the circumstances of his casualty and related them in detail. He had been an artilleryman in command of a battery. In the midst of a critical action one of his men had made a blunder that gravely imperilled the lives of them all. He was himself a man of equable temper, but he told with great animation how in a state of high nervous tension he had turned upon the offender with a fury of reproof in his mind. At that moment a shell had burst at his feet, and he knew no more until he came back to life with a blank past and in a state of acute wretchedness. When he came to consciousness from

hypnosis after telling this narrative, he was a cured man. His natural buoyancy was restored at once and completely, and his memory rapidly recovered nor did the trouble return.

The specialist's explanation, and it was one with which every artist will agree, was that it was, so to speak, a case of an unresolved action of the mind. At a time of acute mental strain the gunner had suddenly been thrown by an accident into a mood of extreme anger, and the mood was violently arrested in mid-career. From that moment it had remained in suspense, and the loss of memory occasioned by the shock of the explosion had made it impossible for him to complete the arc in his mind. The physiological cause of the loss of memory is not to the present point, but it was precisely this unresolved action of the mind that, acting as a continual irritant, produced in his brain the sickness of something in a trap. Under

hypnosis the suspended mental wave had spent itself, and normal functioning returned.

In this illustration is an epitome of the artist's activity. The sole cause of the creation of art is the imperative necessity in some minds for the exact realization through definite and concrete forms of something that in its natural expression is not completely intelligible. The artist's mind is restless always in the presence of the confused medley of life, and achieves composure only in reducing selected volumes of this chaos to shape and order. That is, in fact, what creation means. And while he does this in the first place simply to satisfy his own needs, his art will give a measure of the same satisfaction to other men who come in contact with it.

The material from which the artist thus selects for his purpose passes before him in many kinds, all of them more

or less indefinite and haphazard in their natural expression. It may be the earth and its seasonal changes, or it may be the flux of society, or it may be the pages of history — be it of a nation or of a man — or it may be the complex of an individual character. It does not matter how exhaustively he may use any of these; it is the using of any part of one ot them significantly that gives peace to the purpose of his mind. It is in a very literal sense that the artist is called one who sees, the seer.

It will be noticed that history is as readily to the artist's hand as the daily current of life under his own observation. The aim of the scientific historian is to present a complete and minutely precise record of a period or of a man's career as the case may be. He can never, in the nature of the case, be wholly successful in this aim; it is interesting to reflect on how many stout volumes it

would take to give an exhaustive account of a single year in the most uneventful life. But, none the less, his historical standard is clear. Events and influences are not to be ignored because they are apparently casual, and the insignificant must stand side by side with matters of main interest, and rightly so, since his office is to record and not to select or distinguish. Indeed, one recognizes the true spirit, by reversal, in the historical examiner who set the question, 'What do you know of Canute? Omit all reference to the waves incident.'

When the artist turns to history, then, he will find, as it were, a photographic assembly of facts, and his imagination will feel the old necessity of arranging some of these into self-contained and sufficient forms. He does not compete with the historian, and it is pointless to debate which of the two achieves the greater truth. The artist may, indeed, manipu-

late some of the historian's facts, thereby, perhaps, distressing a few narrowly scientific minds. But it is hard to deny that, in ordering history to what seems to him a truer significance than can be seen in the chance of actual events, he often attains the greater verity. Who, for example, does not understand the scholar gipsy more profoundly in the art of Matthew Arnold than in the chronicle of Glanvil, and in turn more fully in Glanvil's own simple record than he would have done by direct observation of that vagrant Oxford life? And just as it is the artist's business not to write history over again, but to make spiritual inferences from history already written and vital projections of this or that theme lying unmoulded in the historian's page, so is the case with records of individual character. The artist makes no bid for biographical honours. He does not seek to tell either the whole story of a

the manifold aspects of his nature. Hecuba doubtless was a genial gossip on quiet Trojan evenings, and Lorenzo was, likely enough, a shrewd young man of business promise on the Rialto, but these were no concerns of Euripides and Shakespeare. They knew that the obligation of the artist was not to say all things, but to intensify the meaning of some, an obligation that seemed to them to be the one of supreme honour in the province of the mind. If these things were not so, Boswell would be incontestably the greatest master in the English tongue, which he certainly is not for all he is a very considerable fellow, indeed.

When, therefore, from the story of a man or an epoch there emerges some dominating idea, it is almost certain that sooner or later the artists will come along and proceed to isolate that idea from all irrelative things that surround it in history, and re-create it in a form of its

own urging. They may find a dozen different interpretations of it, but each will have its unmistakable and durable meaning. If it is pleaded against them that Hamlet is strangely familiar with the Elizabethan playhouse for a Danish prince of the twelfth century, or that Abraham Lincoln, while he was many things, was never a ship's captain, they take no heed, for they know better than that. And truly it were as wise to blame Whitman for figuring his hero thus as to blame Mr. Shaw, for instance, for editing history to suit his presentation of Cæsar and Cleopatra.

The American Civil War, with Lincoln as its protagonist and the pioneer days as a background, has, it seems to me, more than any other story of the modern world, breaking through all its confusion, just the clear-cut significance upon which the artist's imagination loves to seize. I cannot but hope that some American

poet will presently see in this the fit occasion for the first native epic of the later English-speaking race, and the hope is encouraged by such an admirable little masterpiece as Mr. Lee Masters's 'Spoon River Anthology.' In the meantime the central figure of Lincoln himself has already grown in definition in the work of many artists, who, in so far as this is true, have taken their part in furthering the wider understanding between two countries that has been the theme of these papers. I should like to pass some of this work briefly in review.

IX

Lincoln and the Artists

IX

LINCOLN AND THE ARTISTS

My necessarily imperfect knowledge of later American literature and other arts will make omissions from this note inevitable. Of painting in particular I can say nothing in this connection, since I do not know of any painter who has aimed at interpretation of Lincoln. Should there be any, he will compete with the photographer, who did his work very exhaustively, as little as the writer does with the historian or biographer. I am the happy possessor of a charming coloured lithograph which I take to be contemporary with Lincoln. It is no more than a simple and direct piece of representation, but it has an attractive homely grace and meaning much like that of the Rogers groups that are sure presently to regain the favour that they have lost.

They are unassuming, but they have the quiet native distinction of a flowered sampler or early Staffordshire pottery. The ordinary run of popular Lincoln prints and engravings have little meaning, being manufactured merely to supply a market and having no relation to art.

I suppose a pretty considerable anthology of Lincoln poems might be made, but only three or four have impressed me deeply. This is natural enough, since the influence of a great character will always work slowly upon the poets of his own people, who have to disentangle essentials from the small talk of tradition. And the rest of the world is likely to wait upon their announcement of the imaginative appeal that they at length discover, although in rare instances a stranger is betimes with them. After Whitman's magnificent threnody, written out of a deep personal sorrow, I do not know of anything strikingly memo-

rable until our own time. Then we have a few poems, small in compass, but entirely adequate to their theme and in one or two instances nobly so. Mr. Percy MacKaye's 'Centenary Ode' has a generous sweep and several touches of revelation, but its scheme and the occasion made the highest success very difficult. It remains a poet's tribute if not wholly a poet's achievement. Mr. Edwin Markham, too, worthily adds his word of lasting witness in his 'Lincoln.' I am sure that there are others which I have not been fortunate enough to find, but the two poems that have most moved me are Mr. Vachel Lindsay's 'Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight' and Mr. Lee Masters's 'Ann Rutledge.' If no other commemoration had been made by American poetry than these, the muse of Lincoln's country would not have failed him in her office. Mr. Lindsay, with hardly a false accent, achieves that most diffi-

cult of all things in verse to-day, the grand style. There is no touch of rhetoric in his poem, but it takes us easily into a world of heroic stature, and its speech is that of high ceremonial with no word of affectation. It is a happy thing that the poet who could create this perfect challenge should come from Lincoln's own town. Springfield, Illinois, will some day be aware of a new laurel in its wreath. Mr. Masters's poem on 'Ann Rutledge' in his Spoon River book has a poignancy akin to that of one of Lincoln's own phrases. Of exquisite tenderness, it has that last simplicity of art which it is impossible to perceive without being but a little way from tears. Of slighter rank, but having something of the same quality, is Mr. Masters's other Lincoln poem in the same book, 'Hannah Armstrong.' To read the poems that I have named is in each case to be quickened in understanding of some perma-

nence or another in Lincoln's spiritual being. No new thing is said, but always a new emphasis is made, a new and revealing image created.

Of the presentation of Lincoln in fiction I am not competent to speak, having always been a culpably poor reader of contemporary fiction. But the sculptors have done well by our hero. The great Saint-Gaudens statue at Chicago is probably more popular than any other, and for very good reasons. It has no rare subtlety nor original invention, but it is in the heroic manner without any touch of ridiculous solemnity. It is, in the right way, impressive. Splendidly placed — with a device by which it may be seen by night as well as day — it presents to the public imagination a figure worthily in the great tradition of the forum. It aims at none of the more moving human qualities, but it succeeds in the venture of suggesting that our kind

may be titanic. Official art in its abuses falls often enough into merely pretentious mannerism, but in a vigorous state it has its proper use, and Saint-Gaudens has discovered what this is. Great talent is not the less admirable in that it falls short of the mark of genius, and great talent is unquestionably here. One cannot stand before this gravely intent design without the consciousness that 'nothing common was or mean' in the man so commemorated. In a more intimate, less majestic manner, the O'Connor memorial at Springfield, Illinois, achieves the same distinction. This is a work that loses nothing by a certain modesty of treatment. It is the tribute of an artist seeking honourably to express his own measure of understanding without being tempted to assume the inherent greatness of his subject. The Borglum statue I have not seen, but from photographs I gather that it has unusual power and

imagination. Again there is a revelation of that in character which had not been quite so clear before.

But Lincoln has inspired one sculptor to a work of indisputable genius. Once more it may be necessary to remind ourselves that the artist is not in competition with photographic record, or even with visual memory. These have their own precise value, and no reasonable being underrates them. George Gray Barnard's statue in Cincinnati, now standing in replica in England at Manchester, is a masterpiece of creative interpretation of which every American should be immensely proud. The factions that beset the progress of every art are healthy, and out of them always comes rich and original work. Such tokens of development, however, commonly have, for all their individual worth, some sign of the quarrel in which they were engendered. But now and then a man comes along

who is apparently oblivious of all the feuds, and working in the clear line of descent from a great and long tradition is able to invest his art with entirely new and arresting significance. A notable example is to be found in our modern English school of painting. Invention, sincerity, fearlessness, all these qualities abound in it, and a dozen men are producing work that will stimulate the whole future of painting in the country, and in itself prove to be of durable value. But much of it is a little aggressive, a little touched by anger, to its injury. There is in it a hint of some resentment that was partly its governing impulse. And then you find an artist like Eric Kennington, drawing very simply and directly as though he had never heard of the passionate disputes ringing through the studios, and by sheer intensity and natural instinct absorbing our attention as surely as do the older masters.

And so it is with Mr. Barnard. His Lincoln statue is modern and personal enough, too modern and personal, perhaps, for those who see in tradition not a discipline, but merely an example to be copied. Yet it is as truly informed by tradition as are the new enchantments of the Russian ballet and Thomas Hardy's novels. In technique it frankly, and, as it seems to me, refreshingly, discards some of the more obvious conventions, but in every basic principle of the art it is as profound and as exact as are the creations of Michael Angelo himself. By the simplest means the artist has given us his personal vision of Lincoln, not hesitating to make his own example in such details of design as the placing of the feet and the folding of the great, potent hands, and at the same time he has been content to apply himself to the closest possible verisimilitude. Nothing could be more instructive in the ways of plastic art

than to examine, as I have done, this work of profoundly imaginative genius point by point in relation to Leonard Volk's life-mask. It is to realize anew how splendidly the truth of creative vision has its roots in the truth of reality.

And so the artists, too, in their loneliness are public servants. They help daily to define the symbols around which our thought and desire may be expressed; they give shape to dreams, bringing them to the practical uses of living. If Lincoln shall stand as the figure in which an intellectual and spiritual alliance between America and England shall be articulate to the immeasurable good of mankind, the artists will not be unhonoured in the event.

X

An Epilogue

X

AN EPILOGUE

It is in the shades. On a late spring evening of the year 19—, William Shakespeare *is seated on a fallen tree, by the edge of a small woodland stream. The modern prophets of spiritualistic science, who announce personal continuity with so pure a faith, might take comfort from the Poet's occupation; for as the water trickles and gyrates above the pebbles, sending up here and there little spirals of sand, and catches the shadows from early leaves overhead, he considers it all with the old intentness, murmuring in an undertone familiar snatches of a philosophy that remains unresolved.*

And as he considers anew his sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and tongues in trees, a fellow shade, of the true spectral height, approaches him through the wood. A look of pleased recognition comes into Shakespeare's *face, and he speaks.*

Shakespeare. Hullo—if it is n't Abraham. This is uncommonly well met.

Lincoln. Good evening, Will. I don't want to disturb you, though.

SHAKESPEARE. I could want no better company. Let us talk. Sit down.

LINCOLN (*sitting on the tree-trunk*). A good tree to fell, this. There's nothing like it — the clean sweep, and the ring, and the flying white wedges, and then the whimpering of the wood and the long, drifting fall. That's how it was in Salem. They were good days.

SHAKESPEARE. There were woodmen in Arden too. Where have you been? It's thirty years or more since I saw you.

LINCOLN. It's all that guy Plato. He will argue. I met him just after I left you that time, and we got on to the slave question. I generally let him talk, but I simply could n't stand that. And then there was no end to it. We've been at it ever since. Every year with the coming of the spring he grows more eloquent and more stupid. This is his thirtieth season and I've left him at it. I could bear it no longer. Crazy old Athenian junk.

He's as obstinate as a Sangamon pig too. I've made it perfectly clear to him over and over again. And he will stick to it that the highest interests of a chosen few warrant the subjection —

SHAKESPEARE. Steady, Abraham. Don't start another thirty years with me. And I was never quite all in with the mob, anyway, you know.

LINCOLN. No — that was the worst of you. I suppose that Elizabethan court was pretty suffocating, eh? Could n't always say just what you liked.

SHAKESPEARE. I don't think we showed much sign of suffocating. In fact, our lungs were freer than is common. And we said what we meant. We were poets.

LINCOLN. Then you did n't really care for the people?

SHAKESPEARE. I loved them — so much that I wanted them to change. You loved them, too, I know. You liberated a race. But you had no time to help to

make them better. That 's the real love, is n't it?

LINCOLN. I know. I *could* have helped. It needed that. I like your company, Will. I don't always agree with you, but we seem to understand each other.

SHAKESPEARE. Why not? We come from the same stock. You would have been at home by the Avon.

LINCOLN. I think I should. Those plays of yours were great, Will. You know, the man of affairs, let him keep himself as flexible as he will — and I tried to do that — is bound to gather prejudices, even though they 're honest ones. That 's why I liked your plays — there were no prejudices in them. Everybody had a chance.

SHAKESPEARE. It was my job to understand.

LINCOLN. I know — it was splendid, was n't it — trying to understand people instead of trying to dominate them?

That's what a lot of folks about me never could realize — that I too was more than half poet at heart.

SHAKESPEARE. That's what England gave you.

LINCOLN. That was what I most wanted to do — to bring a poet's understanding to the workaday government of a nation.

SHAKESPEARE. That's what you are giving England. It's good payment.

LINCOLN. I suppose you are the greatest Englishman.

SHAKESPEARE. To my surprise it is said so.

LINCOLN. A poet. That is remarkable.

SHAKESPEARE. It is being suggested that you are the greatest American.

LINCOLN. So I hear.

SHAKESPEARE. A politician. Even more remarkable.

LINCOLN. And yet, it's — what your

descendants would call rather fun, is n't it? A simple proposition — like this. England — a poet — with a shrewd head for affairs — good bargain and a comfortable retirement at the end. But a poet always. America — a politician, searching always for vision, vision — as the poet does. We should understand each other.

SHAKESPEARE. We will see to it that none stop us.

LINCOLN. By the way — did you really do so well out of those plays?

SHAKESPEARE. I built as good a house as any in Stratford out of them, and I took —

LINCOLN. Oh, yes, the trademark of gentility. I never thought of that myself. That is, in America — but it was very natural, Will, and I like you the better for it. A good house — yes, I 'll be bound it was — By the way, I once wrote a poem. You never heard it by any chance? It was n't very good.

SHAKESPEARE. No, I never heard it.

LINCOLN. Shall I repeat it for you?

SHAKESPEARE. I expect, as you say, it was n't very good. And I have rather severe standards. So many of my friends had a talent for that sort of thing.

LINCOLN. Eh? Yes, well, I dare say you are right. (*Rising.*) Shall you be here to-morrow?

SHAKESPEARE. If you will come.

LINCOLN. Good-bye.

SHAKESPEARE. Till then.

LINCOLN *moves away. At a distance he turns.*

LINCOLN. By the way, I see that one of your fellows has made a play about me.

SHAKESPEARE. Indeed? He had an eye for a theme, at least.

LINCOLN. Don't tell any one, but I got a copy sent across here. It 's well enough — in fact, I should like to see it. But he plays the devil with one or two of my best speeches.

SHAKESPEARE. Don't worry, Abraham. They do that with all of mine.

LINCOLN *considers this for a moment, and goes away, leaving* SHAKESPEARE *to the further contemplation of his stream.*

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